Meaning and changing concept of bureaucracy

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The term 'bureaucracy' analyzed explicitly means 'rule by officials' or 'desk government'. It is perplexing to define accurately the term bureaucracy. For the first time the term was used in Germany. Soon it came to be extensively used in the continent to describe government officials. It made its appearance in the first half of 19th Cent. It was Vincent de Gourney, who has coined this term in 1745.Many theorizations attempted to bring out the true meaning of the term, which finally ended up with supplying frames and feature to the empty word. Carlyle outright has rejected it calling it a continental nuisance, but John Stuart Mill writes that the work of government has been in the hands of government by profession and it is Mill's observation that constitutes the essence and meaning of bureaucracy.

Hegel: To him, the bureaucracy was a 'transcendental entity'; a mind above individual mind. According to Hegel, the bureaucracy was the most important universal interest of the state proper. He regarded the bureaucracy as the universal class, synthesizing the particularism of civil society with the general interests of the state. For him, the exercise of power by the bureaucracy was a mission to be performed for God or so0ciety.

Bentham bureaucracy is benevolent social guardian committed to achieving social good. It is assumed that civil servants selflessly seek the welfare of the people even when the people themselves do not know what is in their best interest. This view was dominant for a very long time.

Weber: A more sustained treatment of the term' bureaucracy' was given in late 19th century by Mosca and Michels. The former regarded it as so fundamental to the governing of empires that all political systems could be classified as 'feudal' or 'bureaucratic'.

Michels extended the concept of bureaucracy from the state of political parties and argued that bureaucracy arose from the administrative necessities involved in running a large organization and reinforced the power of the party oligarchy.

As a technical term, bureaucracy is associated with Max Weber. He gave it a precise definition and suggested that it was the best administrative form for rational or efficient pursuit of organizational goals.

Bureaucracy is influenced by socio, cultural, political and economic factors and so, it has different shapes or forms at different point of time. Fritz M Marx has categorized bureaucracy into 4 types: Guardian, Caste, Patronage, and Merit.

Bureaucracy, according to Weber, is not a particularity of western societies. The new kingdom of Egypt, the Roman Empire, the Chinese Empire, the Roman Catholic Church, the European states have all had bureaucracies, as does the modern capitalist enterprise. Bureaucracy has several structural traits. It is a permanent organization involving cooperation among many individuals, each of whom performs specialized functions. The bureaucrats perform a function separate from family life.

He put emphasis on rational organization and bureaucracy as existing structures of modern societies, which, far from being weakened, would rather strengthen in the event of a transition to socialism.

According to Max Weber, three elements constitute bureaucratic authority. They are as follows:

1. The regular activities required for the purpose of the bureaucratically governed structure are distributed in a fixed way as official duties.
2. The authority to give the commands required for the discharge of these duties is distributed in a stable way and is strictly delimited by rules concerning the coercion placed at the disposal of the officials.
3. Methodical provision is made for the regular and continuous fulfillment of these duties and for the execution of the corresponding rights; only persons who have the generally regulated qualification to serve and employed.(Gerth & Mills).

Weber sees bureaucratic tendencies not only in the modern state and private capitalist enterprises, but also in modern public institutions such as army, universities and churches.

Bureaucratization consequences: permeation of bureaucratic values, ways of thought and behavior through society. Political factors like universal suffrage rise of mass political parties etc. work towards bureaucratization.

Ideal Type: A mental map or mental construct that cannot be found in reality. It is an abstraction and as such exaggerates certain features and de

emphasizes certain. It refers, in fact, to the sociological concept of 'rationalization of collective authorities'.

- ➢ Position
- ➢ Office holding as a 'vocation'
- ➢ Enjoys social esteem guaranteed by rules of rank order
- ➢ Appointed by superior authority

Pure Types

Max Weber distinguished 3 pure types: Traditional, Charismatic and Rational-legal. He regarded bureaucracy sustained and sanctified by the purest type of exercise of legal authority. It is most efficient form of organization, superior to any other form in precision, stability, stringency and reliability.

The following characteristics:

a. Separation of office
b. Selection by merit
c. Fixed remuneration
d. Hierarchy of office
e. Allocation of authority
f. Allocation of activities
g. Strict adherence to rules
h. Promotion depends upon judgments of seniors
i. Career bureaucracy ;promotion according to the achievement or seniority or both
j. Subject to strict and systematic discipline
k. Selection on the basis of technical qualification not selection.

According to Weber, Bureaucracy is by far the most efficient instrument of large scale administration which has ever been developed and in modern social order has become overwhelmingly dependent on it.